



Embassy of the United States of America
Mauritius and Seychelles

Exercise Cutlass Express 2021 Closing Ceremony

August 6, 2021: Exercise Cutlass Express 2021, sponsored by U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and conducted by U.S. Naval Forces Africa, successfully took place in Seychelles from July 26 to August 5. The closing ceremony was held at 9a.m. this morning.

Cutlass Express is designed to assess and improve combined maritime law enforcement capacity and promote national and regional security in East Africa and to increase interoperability between the U.S., African, and international partners.

During the exercise, 13 nations, including Seychelles, communicated with each other across several Maritime Operations Centers and demonstrated that they can work across the Western Indian Ocean and jointly address the security challenges affecting their maritime zone. The participating officers trained and conducted a series of scenarios that prepared them to combat and defeat piracy, narcotics trafficking, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.

During his remarks at the closing ceremony, U.S. Embassy Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Thom Khol thanked the government of Seychelles and the Seychelles People's Defense Force for their efforts and for allowing this exercise to happen this year despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

"In its decade of existence, Cutlass Express has had one overarching aim: the building and maintenance of security partnerships. With stronger partnerships, we are now better equipped to deter and suppress crimes at sea, preserve our ecosystems, and protect our maritime resources. The effort and teamwork on display during the past two weeks is a testament to the professionalism and dedication of our forces. May this and our future collaborations continue to advance our mutual desire for a more secure and prosperous environment in and around the Western Indian Ocean region," Thom Khol said.

This year's training began with an in-port training period, followed by at-sea scenarios. The exercises included in-person classroom training given by the UK Royal Navy and a U.S. Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team on boarding and searching; training provided by INTERPOL on the Law of the Sea; practical, on-site boarding and evidence handling drills given by INTERPOL; Maritime Operation Center training at the Regional Coordination Operations Centre (RCOC); and Visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) practical training exercises. In attendance at exercise Cutlass Express 2021 was Rear Admiral Jeffrey Spivey, the Director of the Maritime Partnership Program for U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/Sixth Fleet.

At the closing ceremony this morning, Lieutenant Colonel Jean Attala, Commander of the Seychelles Coast Guard, said, “The practical boarding exercises conducted this week involving search for narcotics and weapons are consistent with the types of realistic scenarios encountered by our VBSS teams during their various operations within our Area of Responsibility. Additional expert inputs received from the trainers will without doubt enhance our capabilities and definitely make a difference in the way we operate in the future”.

Cutlass Express is AFRICOM’s largest naval training exercise in the Indian Ocean, bringing together U.S. forces and regional partners to share their expertise and experience.

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